



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
JOSEPH A. CURTATONE
MAYOR

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

ALTERATION TO A HISTORIC PROPERTY STAFF REPORT

Site / District(s): 170 Summer Street, c. 1865 – John Howie House, Central/Atherton/Spring Summer LHD
Case: HPC 13.007

Applicant Name: Seth Kintigh, Owner
Applicant Address: 170 Summer Street, Somerville MA 02143

Date of Application: 1/30/13

Legal Notice: *Change 3-tab asphalt shingles on Mansard roof to architectural shingles or synthetic slates.*

Staff Recommendation: Certificate of Appropriateness
Date of Public Hearing: 2/19/13

I. Building Description

Architectural Description:

Built c. late 1860s' this Italianate house is noteworthy for its well - preserved mansard-roofed form and especially its intact east porch with its numerous original elements. Prominently sited at the northeast corner of Summer and Harvard streets, this house is perched at the southern crest of Spring Hill. Indeed, ground at the front of the house is at an elevation higher than that of the rear of the property.

This L-shaped Italianate house is composed of a one-bay-by-two bay main block and a two-bay-by-one bay rear ell. The house's two components rise two-stories from a red brick basement to bell cast mansard roofs.

Both the edges of the main block and rear ell are accented by narrow corner boards. The narrow, one-bay Summer Street elevation exhibits a one-story bay. The windows of the bay surmount a flared wood shingle-sheathed apron and are surmounted by rectangular panels set off by raised moldings. The bay is enclosed by a bracketed hip roof. Above this bay is a double, fully-enframed window that culminates in a bracketed, cornice-headed lintel. Above the one-story bay is a double window that is fully-enframed and bracketed. Above the double window is the roof s



bracketed cornice. A single flat-roofed dormer is in evidence at the Summer Street roof slope. In general, windows of both the main block and rear ell are fully-enframed and cornice-headed.

The house's east facade features a remarkably intact entrance porch complete with slat work railings and square posts. The porch posts rise to a slat work transom located beneath the eaves of the porch's-shed roof. Marking the entrance is a pair of curved arches exhibiting spandrels enlivened by Gothicized gingerbread tracery. A rectangular transom surmounts the front door.

Historical Context/Evolution of Structure or Parcel:

170 Summer Street by virtue of its tree-shaded setting, still manages to convey a picture of rural-suburban Spring Hill before the building boom of the 1880s and 1890s resulted in a more densely built-up neighborhood. Built c. 1865 to 1870, this house was evidently built for John Howie, "designer." Howie commuted to work in Boston's financial district. In 1871, his office is listed at 55 Franklin Street. By 1877, he worked at Summer Street, corner of Devonshire Street. Interestingly, by 1879, Howie is listed as a designer working in New York-City. Howie did not however sell the property despite his relocation to New York. Henry D. Howie, a salesman who commuted from Somerville to 53 Summer Street, Boston, is listed here as a boarder in 1879. The house remained in the Howie family until the early 1900s.

By 1903, George Brewer, insurance salesman, lived at 170 Summer Street. He commuted to work at an insurance agency located at 66 Batterymarch, Boston. Brewer, his wife Mary and son John H. Brewer lived here until at least the early 1920s. By 1930, seven members of the James Ormond family, including five nurses, are listed at this address including: Mrs. Catherine Ormond widow-of James, Roy J. Ormond, machinist; Elizabeth Ormond, nurse; Helen Ormond, nurse; Margaret Ormond, nurse; Mary-E. Ormond nurse and Catherine Ormond, nurse. By 1940, the number of Ormonds living under the same roof had been reduced from seven to three, including the nurses Catherine, Margaret and Mary.

II. Project Description

Proposal of Alteration:

The Applicant would like to replace existing 3-tab shingles with architectural shingles. His first choice is the CertainTeed® Carriage House® shingles which carry a strong shadow line although if he can afford them, he would like to install synthetic slates as a closer to real slate appearance.

III. Findings for a Certificate of Appropriateness

1. Prior Certificates Issued/Proposed:

This is the first time this newly designated property has been in before the Commission. It has recently been purchased by the Applicant and needs a lot of work as it has been in one family since at least 1930. The previous residents were quite elderly and unable to undertake any work on the house.

The Applicant proposes to replace the 3-tab asphalt roof shingles with something closer to the scalloped slate roof shingles he found in the basement. Due to the large amount of work needed on the house, he is unable to undertake replacing the roof with slate at this time.

2. Precedence:

Only 2 Mansard roofed designated houses have had their roofs replaced with architectural shingles. 53 Moore Street used Owens Corning Berkshire shingles with no color specified on the Certificate. 18 Summit Avenue used 2 kinds: CertainTeed® Grand Manor™ and Carriage House™ Black Pearl colored

architectural shingles installed with the same proportions of square and scalloped shingles as the existing roof. Several Queen Anne and related style houses have received Certificates of Appropriateness for Slateline shingles which have a similar width and exposure of a square edged slate. The options for architectural shingles in a scallop pattern are limited and not as visually close to real scalloped slate.

3. *Considerations:*

- *What is the visibility of the proposal?*

The replacement will be highly visible especially on the sides of the Mansard. The house is on a corner lot where Summer Street, Harvard Street and Benton Road meet.

- *What are the Existing Conditions of the building / parcel?*

The last building permits found were for the construction of the garage in 1924 and the repair or construction of the porch in 1916. As noted earlier, the house was in the same family from 1930 until this year and has been neglected for some time as can be evidenced by the lack of building, gas, plumbing or electrical permits of any sort. Fortunately, this also means that much of the house is in its original condition and has not been much altered.

The primary purpose of the Preservation Ordinance is to encourage preservation and high design standards in Local Historic Districts, in order to safeguard the architectural heritage of the City. Guidelines have been developed to ensure that rehabilitation efforts, alterations, and new construction all respect the design fabric of the districts and do not adversely affect their present architectural integrity.

- *Does the proposal coincide with the General Approach set forth in the Design Guidelines?*

Yes.

D. When replacement of architectural features is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence of the original or later important features.

The proposed replacement is a better match to the original roof than currently exists.

- *Does the proposal coincide with the appropriate Specific Guidelines as set forth in the Design Guidelines?*

B. Roofs

1. *Preserve the integrity of the original or later important roof shape.*

The roof shape will not be altered.

2. *Retain the original roof covering whenever possible. If the property has a slate roof, conserve the roof slates. Slate is a near-permanent roofing material, and deterioration is generally caused by rusted roofing nails.*

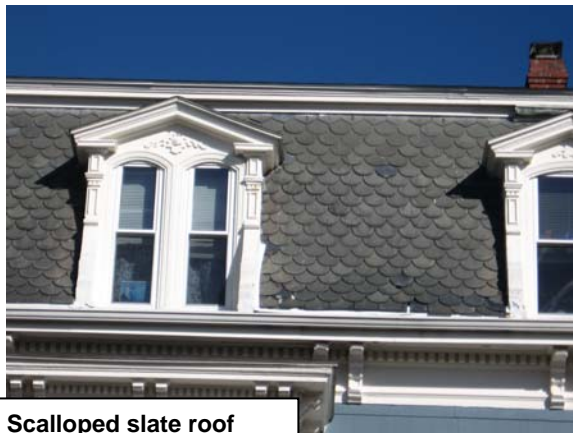
The current roof is 3-tab asphalt and may be replaced in kind. The original roof had scalloped slates either in the whole or in part as can be evidenced by the scalloped slate found in the basement and the frequent use of such material on existing mansards in Somerville.

3. *Whenever possible, replace deteriorated roof covering with material that matches the old in composition, color, size, shape, texture and installation detail.*

The proposed architectural are as close as the Applicant can get within his budget.

4. *Preserve the architectural features that give the roof its distinctive character, such as cornices, gutters, iron filigree, cupolas, dormers and brackets. Downspouts should be inconspicuously located and should be painted to match the color of the siding.*

The proposal meets the intent of the general guidelines of replacement based on physical evidence and is an upgrade of the existing condition. The Applicant found 2 boxes of scalloped shingles in the basement which he had intended to use until he found that it would be too costly to undertake at this time. It is unknown whether there was a patterned mansard using scallops as part of the mansard or if the entire roof had been scalloped. Several styles can be found on Somerville Mansards.



Scalloped slate roof



CertainTeed® Grand Manor™ and Carriage House™

III. Recommendations

The Staff recommendation is based on a complete application and supporting materials, as submitted by the Applicant, and an analysis of the historic and architectural value and significance of the site, building or structure, the general design, arrangement, texture, material and color of the features involved, and the relation of such features of buildings and structures in the area, in accordance with the required findings that are considered by the Somerville Historic District Ordinance for a Historic District Certificate. This report may be revised or updated with new a recommendation or findings based upon additional information provided to Staff or through more in depth research conducted during the public hearing process.

Staff determines that the alteration for which an application for a Historic Certificate has been filed is appropriate for and compatible with the preservation and protection of the c. 1865 – John Howie House, Central/Atherton/Spring Summer Local Historic District; therefore **Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission grant Seth Kintigh, Owner, a Certificate of Appropriateness to replace the 3-tab asphalt shingles with architectural shingles using a decorative scalloped shingle.**

170 Summer Street



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